Radiance

Book: 83

Nevaeh

Marcel Ray Duriez

15 SHEZORS

The silent light of another cloudy day finally woke me up. I put my arm over my eyes and felt weak and dazed. Something, a dream that I was trying to remember, was having a tough time entering my consciousness. I groaned and rolled onto my side, hoping for more sleep to come. Then the day before, my consciousness was flooded.

'Ah! I sat up so fast I felt dizzy. Your hair looks like a

haystack...but I like it. His raspy voice came from the rocking chair in the corner. Melvin! You stayed! I was happy and without thinking I crossed the room and threw myself into his arms. I was shocked by my own uncontrollable enthusiasm as my thoughts locked onto my actions. I looked at him, afraid that I had crossed the wrong line. But he laughed. Of course, he answered, he was surprised, but he was satisfied with my reaction. His hands rubbed my back. I carefully rested my head

on his shoulder and breathed in the scent of his skin. I was sure it was a dream. 'You're not that creative,' he teased.

Charlie! I remembered, without thinking again, I jumped up and went to the door. It went an hour ago - I can add after reconnecting your battery cables. I must admit that I was disappointed. If you were determined to go for it, would it really take that to stop you? I thought about where I was, I wanted to go back to him badly, but I was

afraid that I would not be able to catch my breath in the morning. You are not usually confused in the morning,' he said. He kept his arms open for my return. An almost irresistible invitation. I need one more human minute,' I admitted. I will wait. Unrecognizable, I threw myself into the toilet. I did not know myself inside and out. The face in the mirror was alien-overly bright eyes, excited red spots on my cheekbones. After brushing my teeth, I tried to fix the tangled mess in my hair.

I splashed chilly water on my face and tried to breathe normally, with no discernible success. I half ran into my room. It seemed like a miracle that he was there, that his arms were still waiting for me. He extended his hand to me; my heart was beating non-stop. You're welcome, he whispered as he hugged me. She hugged me silently for a while until I felt that her clothes had changed, and her hair was smooth. 'Did you go' I asked, touching the collar of his cold shirt. I

could barely leave in the clothes I came in - what would the neighbors think? I spoke. You slept very soundly; I did not miss anything. His eyes were shining. 'The conversation came earlier. I moaned. 'What did you hear? His golden eyes became incredibly soft. 'You said you loved me.'

'You already knew that' I reminded him, clearing my head. That was nice to hear though. I hid my face on his shoulder. 'I love you,' I whispered. It is my life now,' he

answered simply. There was nothing to say now. He waved us across the room like it was breakfast time,' he said casually at last-to prove, I am sure, all my human frailties he remembered. So, I squeezed my throat with both hands and looked at him with wide eyes. Shock crossed his face. Just kidding! 'I scoffed. 'And you said I couldn't move!'

He frowned in disgust. It was not funny. It was funny, and you know it. But I looked into his golden eyes to make sure I was forgiven. It

was me. Need I rephrase that?' he asked. 'Breakfast time for a human.' Oh, good. He threw me gently over the stone shoulder, but with a speed that took my breath away. I protested as he carried me easily up the stairs, but I ignored. He sat. straight in the chair. The kitchen was bright and cheerful, as if it had absorbed my mood. What was that? 'Any breakfast?'

I asked pleasantly. That threw him for a minute. Um, I am not sure. What would it be? Do you like

it?' His marble brow furrowed. I jumped up and smiled. Well, I am doing well. Watch me hunt. I found a bowl and a box of cereal. I felt his eyes on me as I poured the milk. He took a spoon. I sat my food on the table and then stood. Buy you something Can I?' I asked, not wanting to be rude. He rolled his eyes. 'Eat, Lily.' He sat at the table looking at her. As I took a bite. He was watching me, studying my every move. It embarrassed me. I opened my mouth to talk, to distract him.

Today's agenda what is up?' I asked. Hmmm…' I watched as he carefully composed his answer.

How about meeting my family? 'I swallowed. Are you afraid now? He looked hopeful. Yes, I admitted it; how could I deny it - he saw my eyes.' Do not worry. He smiles. 'I will protect you.' 'I'm not afraid of them,' I said. 'I am afraid they…someone…like me…home to meet them? Do they know I know them?' Oh, they already know everything. They had a bet yesterday,

you know,' he smiled, but his voice was stern, 'about whether I will get you back, though why anyone would bet against Naddalin Natalie I cannot imagine. In any case, we have no secrets in the family. It is not possible, my mind reading and Naddalin Natalie seeing the future and all that.

-And-

Jae makes you feel hot and fuzzy from spilling his guts, do not forget that. I washed my face. 'So, Naddalin Natalie saw me coming?'

His reaction was strange. 'Something like that,' he said uneasily and turned away. so, I could not see his eyes. I was curious. Is he okay?' he asked, turning sharply to me, and glaring at my breakfast. 'Honestly, it does not look too good. appetizing. 'Well, it's not a nervous grizzly...' he muttered, ignoring her as he flashed. I was still wondering why he had responded like that when he mentioned Naddalin Natalie's name. I hurried into my slit, speculating. In the kitchen, again, the statue of Adonis

stared out the back windows. Then his eyes turned to me again, and the heart he smiled his splitting smile.

You should introduce me to your father, too, I think. 'He already knows you,' I remembered. As your lover. I looked at him suspiciously. 'Why?' 'Isn't that common? he asked innocently. I do not know,' I admitted. My dating history gave me a few reference points to work with. Normal dating rules apply here.' Not necessary, you know. I do not expect you to… I mean, you do not have to

be pretentious to me.' Her smile was patient. 'I'm not pretentious.' I pushed the remains of my cereal onto the bowl. biting my lip around the edges of the bowl. You are going to tell Charlie if I am your boyfriend or not.' he asked. This is you? 'The thought of Melvin and Charlie, and I stifled my inner gnashing of teeth at the word. I do not know if we would give it to her at the same time in the same room with my lover or all the gory details.' She reached across the

table to lift my chin with a cold, soft finger.

'But why am I so he will need to explain that I am here. I do not want Chief Black to get a restraining order against me. will you?' I asked suddenly, worried. 'Are you really going to be here?' If you want me, she assured me. I will always want you,' I warned. 'Forever.' she reached out to touch her fingertips to my cheek. Her expression was unfathomable. Does that make you sad?' I asked. He did

not answer. He looked into my eyes for an immeasurable amount of time. 'Are you done?' he finally asked. I jumped in. 'Yes.' Getting dressed, I will wait here. It was hard to decide what to wear. I doubted there were any etiquette books about what to wear when your vampire love took you home to meet the vampire family. I said that to myself. It was a relief to think. I knew I was purposely avoiding her. I found myself in my only skirt-long, khaki, still casual. I put on a navy-blue

blouse that she had once complimented.

A quick look in the mirror told me my hair was completely out of place, so I put it on. put it in a ponytail. OKAY. I went down the stairs. 'I am worthy. He was waiting at the bottom of the stairs, closer than I thought, and I ran right into him. He teased me, keeping me at a cautious distance for a few seconds before suddenly approaching. He made a mistake again; he whispered in my ear. 'You're completely

obscene - no one should look this attractive, it's not fair. » How charming? ' I asked. 'Can I change...' he sighed, shaking his head. 'You're so absurd.' He pressed his cold lips gently to my forehead and the room spun. was the question. His fingers moved slowly down my spine, his breath coming faster against my skin.

My hands went limp on his chest, and I felt dizzy again. He slowly tilted his head and pressed his cold lips to mine a second time, very

carefully, parting slightly. And then I fell. Lily? His voice was excited as he grabbed me and pulled me up. 'You...make me...weak,' I accused him confusedly. What am I going to do with you? he moaned angrily. 'Yesterday I kissed you and you attacked me.! You passed out on me today! I laughed weakly, letting your arms support me as I felt dizzy. There is a lot to be good at,' she sighed. That is the problem. I was still dizzy. 'You're so good. Ch oh well.' 'Are you sick?' he asked; he

had seen me like this before. happened. I shook my head apologetically, 'I forgot to breathe.' 'I can't take you anywhere like that.' 'I'm fine' I said, 'What does it matter if the family thinks I'm crazy anyway?'

He measured my face for a moment. I love that color on your skin,' she suggested unexpectedly. I blushed happily and looked. Look, I am really trying not to think about what to do, can we go now?' I asked. And you are worried not because you

are going to meet a bunch of vampires, but because you think they will not like you, right? He shook his head. 'You're amazing.' I realized that as he drove my car out of the main part of town, I had no idea where he lived. The Susquehanna River, the road meandered northward, the houses passing in front of us grew farther and farther away.

Then we drove through the misty forest past other houses. I was trying to decide whether to ask or be

patient when he suddenly turned onto an unpaved road. It was unmarked, barely visible among the ferns. The forest encroached on both sides, leaving the road a few feet ahead as it snaked around the ancient trees. And then, after a few miles, the forest thinned out a bit and suddenly we were in a small meadow, or was it really a lawn?

The gloom of the forest was unrelieved, for there were six primordial cedar trees, shading an entire acre with their broad

branches. The trees kept their protective shade on the rising walls of the house, and the deep porch surrounding the first floor had worn away. I do not know what I was expecting, but it certainly was not. The house was timeless, gracious and 100 years old. It was painted a soft, pale white, three stories high, rectangular, and well proportioned. The windows and doors were part of the original structure or a perfect restoration. My car was the only one in sight. Nearby, I could hear the

river hidden in the darkness of the forest.

'Wow.' You like it?' He smiled 'It... There is a certain attraction. He pulled the end of my ponytail and was amazed. Ready?' he asked when I opened the door. I did not even go through - let us go. I tried to laugh, but it got stuck in my throat. I was nervously straightening my hair. You are so cute.' He quickly grabbed my hand without thinking. We walked through the deep shadows to the porch. I know he can

feel my stress; His thumb rubbed soothing circles on the back of my hand.

He opened the door for me. The inside is more surprising and less predictable than the outside. It is very bright, incredibly open, and exceptionally large. Originally it was supposed to have several rooms, but the walls were removed from the first floor to create a wider space. The back, south-facing wall has been completely replaced with glass, and beyond the shady cedar, the lawn

stretches out to the wide river. A large winding staircase dominates the west side of the room. The walls, soaring ceilings, wooden floors, and thick carpets are all different shades of white. Waiting to greet us, standing to the left of the door, high up on the floor of a gleaming grand piano, were Melvin's parents.

I have seen Dr. Shezor, of course, but I could not help but be struck again by his youth, his extreme perfection. By his side was Karly, I think, the only person in the

family I had never seen before. She had the same pale, beautiful features as the others. Something about her heart-shaped face, her wisps of soft, caramel-colored hair, reminded me of Ing and the silent-film era. He is shorter, and thinner, but less angular, and more rounded than the others. They both casually wear light colors that match the interior of the house. They smiled in welcome but did not take any steps to contact us. I am not trying to scare me, I guess. Melchor, Karly, Melvin's voice broke

the short silence, 'This is Lily. You're very welcome, Lily. Melchor measured his step, cautious as he approached me. He temporarily raised his hand, And I continued to shake hands. to him.

Nice. to see you again, doctor, please call me Melchor. Melchor. I smiled at him; my sudden confidence surprised me. I felt the comfort of having Melvin by my side possible. Karly smiled and continued, reaching- out my hand. His cold, stony understanding was just what I

expected. It is so nice to meet you,' he said eagerly. Thank you. Nice to meet you too. And it is like meeting a fairy tale - Snow White, in the flesh.

Where are Naddalin Natalie and Jae? Melvin asked, but no one answered, as they had just appeared at the top of the wide staircase. Hey Melvin! Naddalin Natalie called excitedly. He ran up the stairs, a straight black hair and white skin, and came to a sudden and beautiful stop in front of me. Melchor and Karly warned about that, but I liked

it. It was natural to him, anyway. Hi Lily!' said Naddalin Natalie, and she continued to kiss my cheek. If Melchor and Karly had been wary before, they would be trapped now. My eyes twinkled, but I was also happy because she accepted me completely. It was surprising that I found Melvin rigid at my side. I looked at his face, but his expression was unreadable.

You stink, I have never seen it before. No one else knew what to say, and then there was Jae - Tall and

Leonine. A feeling of ease spread through me, and I was suddenly relieved, wherever I was. Melvin looked at Jae, raising his eyebrows, and I remembered what Jae could have done. Hello, Lily,' said Jae. He moved away, offering not to shake my hand. But it was impossible for him to feel awkward. Come on, Jae. I smiled shyly at him, and then at the others. 'All of you. hard to meet - you have an incredibly beautiful house,' I added traditionally. Thank you,' said Karly. 'We are so glad you came. He

spoke with emotion, and I realized that he thought I was brave.

I also realized that Vivian and Dejen were nowhere to be seen, and I was very innocent of Melvin Denial when I asked him if other people did not like me. Melchor's expression distracted me from this train of thought; he looked at Melvin meaningfully with a deep expression. From the corner of my eye from there, I nodded once to Melvin. I looked away, trying to be polite. My eyes wandered again to the beautiful

instrument on the stage near the door. I suddenly remembered my childhood fantasy that, if I won the lottery, I would buy a grand piano for my mother. particularly good - he just plays for himself in our second-hand upright - but I love watching him play. He is happy, absorbed - He's like a bag -or a mysterious being to me, someone outside of the 'mother' persona I take for granted. Let me teach you a lesson, but like most children, I cried until he left me. Karly saw my engagement. Are

you playing?' he asked, leaning his head over the piano. I nodded.

'Not at all. But it is nice. Is it yours?' No,' he laughed. Did Melvin not tell you that he is musical? No.' I stared at his suddenly innocent expression with narrowed eyes. 'I should have known, I guess. Karly raised her delicate eyebrows in confusion. Melvin can do everything, right? I explained. Jae hissed and Karly gave Melvin a scolding look. I hope you do not pretend-that is rude,' he scolded. Just a little,' he

laughed freely. Her face softened at the sound, and they shared a brief look that I did not understand, though Karly's face seemed almost grave. She was amazing,

'I did the right thing. Well, game to her,' Karly encouraged. You are just saying it is rude to pretend,' he countered. There are exceptions to every rule,' he replied. I want to hear you play,' I willingly said. It was settled later. Karly pushed him to the piano. He pulled me with him and sat me on the seat next to him. Turned

the key Before he gave me a long, eager look.

-And-

Then his fingers quickly swept into the ivory, and the room was filled with such an intricate, exquisite composition, it was impossible to believe in just one set of hands. I lowered my chin. Feeling the drop, my mouth opened wide in surprise, and I heard a low chuckle behind me at my reaction. Melvin looked at me casually, the music still moving around us without stopping,

and blinking. 'You like it?' You wrote this?'

I continued to breathe. shaking her head. 'This is Karly's favorite. I closed my eyes, shaking my head. What is the problem?' I felt so insignificant. The music slowed down, became softer, and to my surprise, I traced the melody of the lullaby weaving through the scattered notes. You encourage it,' he said softly. The music became unbearably sweet. I could not speak. They want you, you know,' he said in

conversation. 'Karly especially. I looked back, but the great room was empty now. Where did they go?' It is quite different that gives us privacy, I guess. I sighed. 'They like me. But Vivian and Dejen…' I trailed off, not sure how to express my doubts. He shuddered.

'Don't worry about Vivian,' he said, his eyes wide and seductive. He will come. I bit my lip in suspicion. 'Dejen?' 'Well, he thinks I am crazy, it is true, but he does not have a problem with you. He tries to

reason with Vivian. What is bothering him? answer. He sighed deeply. 'What Vivian struggles with the most... is who we are. It is hard for her to know the truth from the outside. And she is a little jealous.' Is Vivian jealous of me? I asked in disbelief. I tried to imagine a universe where someone as breathless as Vivian would have any probable reason to feel jealous of someone like me. people.' He shuddered. 'He wished he were too. Oh,' I mumbled, still stunned. 'Even

Jae, but...' 'It's my fault,' he said. 'I told you he was the latest test of our way of life. I warned him to stay away. I thought about the reason and shivered. Karly and Melchor...?' I continued quickly to stop her from paying attention. Glad to see myself happy.

Karly does not care if you have a third eye and webbed feet. This time she was worried about me, afraid that something was missing from my essential makeup, that Melchor replaced me when I was

young... that is ridiculous. Every time I touch you, she chokes with satisfaction. Naddalin Natalie seems so... passionate.' Naddalin Natalie has her way of seeing things,' he said with tight lips. And you are not going to explain it, are you? A moment of wordless communication passed between us. He realized that he knew I knew that he was hiding something from me. I realize that he has nothing to give. Not now.'

So, what did Melchor tell you earlier? His eyebrows knit

together. I shivered. 'No doubt.' He looked at me thoughtfully for a few seconds before answering. 'He wants to tell me some news - he does not know if it is something I am going to share with you. Do you want to?' Or you have been overprotective for weeks - and I do not want you to think I am a tyrant. What is wrong?' Nothing wrong, of course. Naddalin Natalie just saw some visitors arriving soon. They know we are here, and they are interested. Visitor?' 'Of course... Well, they are

not like us, of course - in their hunting habits, I mean. They may never make it to town, but I will never let you out of my sight until they are gone.

I shivered. ''Finally, a reasonable answer!' he murmured. 'You had no sense of self-preservation. I let him go, looking into the distance, my eyes roamed the wide room again. He followed my gaze. 'Didn't he?' he asked, keeping his voice low. No.' I admitted. No coffin, no pile of skulls in the corners;

I did not even think we had houses at home... how depressing for you,' he continued slyly. I ignored his teasing. 'It's too light... too open.' When. He got serious. Then he answered...' This is a place where there is no need to hide. The song he still plays, Ang Akong Awit, drifts towards the end, with the final chords, moved to a more somber key. The last note hovers in the stillness of the silence. 'Thank you,' I murmured. I realized that there were tears in my eyes.

I scolded them in shame.

He touched the corner of my eye, flicking the one I remembered. He raised his finger and checked for a drop of moisture. Then, so quickly I was not positive that it was there, he put his finger in his mouth to taste it... I looked at him questioningly, and he turned for a long time to back before the last smile Raha. Do you want to see the rest of the house?' No coffin?' I confirmed, the sarcasm in my voice not fully disguising the slight but genuine concern I felt. He

laughed, took my hand, and led me away from the piano. No casket,' he promised. We walked up the giant staircase, my hand running along the satin-smooth rail. The long hall above the stairs was covered with honey-colored wood, like planks.

'Vivian and Dejen's room...Melchor's office... Naddalin Natalie's room...' He motioned me through the door. He would go on, but I stopped at the end of the hall and stared in disbelief at the ornament hanging on the wall above

my head. Melvin smiled at my confused look. 'You can laugh,' he said. 'It's kind of ironic.' I did not laugh. My hand lifted involuntarily and reached out a finger as if to touch the huge wooden cross, the black bronze contrasting with the light-colored walls. I did not touch it, although I was curious if the old wood would be as silky as it looks. 'It must be very old,' I guessed. He shrugged. 'Early thirties.' 'I took my eyes off the cross and stared at it. 'Why did you put it here? I wondered,

'Nostalgia. It belonged to Melchor's father.' 'Does he collect antiques?' I suggested skeptically- 'No. He carved it himself. It hangs on the wall above the parish pulpit where he preached. 'I am not sure if my expression betrayed my shock, but I looked back at the simple and ancient cross, just in case. I did mental arithmetic quickly; the cross is over three hundred and seventy years old.' The silence stretched as I struggled to think about the concept for so many years. 'Are you all, right?' He looked

worried. 'How old is Melchor? I ignored his question, still staring, and asked silently, 'He just celebrated his three hundred and sixty-second birthday,' Melvin said. I looked back a million times and the problem were in my eyes. He looked at me carefully as he said, 'He believes that Melchor was born in London in the '60s.

The time was not that precise back then, anyway, for the average person. That was before Cromwell, though. 'I kept my

composure, aware of his scrutiny as I listened. 'He was the only son of an Anglican priest. His mother died when he was born. His father was an intolerant man. When the Protestants came to power, he was passionate about his faith. 'The persecution of Roman Catholics and other religions. He also believed very strongly in the realities of evil. He hunted down witches, werewolves... and vampires.' I grew up very firm on that word. I am sure he noticed, but he did not pause and continued.

'They burned a lot of innocent people and the real creature he was looking for wasn't so easy to catch.' As the priest got older, He put his obedient son in charge of the raid. At first, Melchor was disappointed. He was not in a hurry to accuse him and went to see those demons that did not exist. But he was more persistent and smarter than his father. He found a group of actual vampires who were hiding in the city's sewers and only going out to hunt at night. Back then, when

monsters were more than myths and legends, that was the way of life for many. 'Of course, people picked up pitch forks and torches.'--his brief laugh grew darker now-'and then waited for Melchor down the street where he saw the monster. Eventually one showed up.' His sound is quiet. 'He must be old and frail. Melchor smells the crowd and hears him yelling at the others in Latin. He runs across the street and Melchor - he is twenty-three.' And amazingly fast - leads the chase. The

creature overtook them easily, but Melchor thought it was too hungry, so he turned and attacked. He fell on Melchor first, but the others were close, and he turned to defend himself. He killed two people and got there.

'Fleeing with a third party, leaving Melchor bleeding in the street. He stopped. I feel like he was adjusting something to get me something.' Melchor knew what his father would do. Corpses will be burned - anything infected by the

monster must be destroyed. Melchor instinctively acted to save his life. He crept out of the alley as the crowd followed the devil and his victims. He hid in the cellar and buried himself in rotting potatoes for three days. It is a miracle that he was able to remain silent and remain unknown. 'I do not know what my face was showing, but it came off suddenly. 'How do you feel?' church. I am fine, 'I assured him.

-And-

Even though I bit my lip hesitantly, he must have seen the curiosity in my eyes. He smiled. I hope you have a few more questions for me.' Rarely.' His smile spread over his bright teeth. He took my hand and left the hall. 'Come on, then,' he encouraged. 'I will tell you.

16 MELCHOR

He took me back to what Melchor called his office. He stood outside the door for a moment. 'Come in,' Melchor's voice invited. Melvin opened the door to a high-

ceilinged bedroom with a tall west-facing window. The back wall is covered with dark wood - where it can be seen. Most of the wall space was taken up by tall bookshelves that towered over my head and held more books than I had ever seen outside of a library. Melchor sat in a leather chair behind a large red desk. He just marked the pages of the thick volume he held. The room was exactly what I had always imagined a college principal would look like -

only Melchor looked too young to fit. 'What can I do for you?'

he asked happily, standing up from his seat. 'I want to tell Lily some of our stories,' Melvin said. Your story. 'We did not mean to bother you,' 'I am sorry. Not quite. Where do you start?' Wagoner,' Melvin answered putting the light on my shoulder and turning me towards the door we had just entered. Every time he touches me, even in the most casual way, my heart responds. Melchor was acting strangely there.

The wall we are facing today is different from the others. Instead of books, this wall is filled with paintings of all sizes, some in bright colors, others in dull monochrome. I was looking for some reason, some common motif connection for the collection, but my quick search did not find it. Melvin pulled me to the left, standing in front of a small square oil painting in a simple wooden frame. It does not happen on bigger and brighter things; painted in different shades of sepia, it depicts

a small town with steep roofs, with towers on top of several towers. The first floor has a wide river around a bridge covered with buildings that look like small cathedrals. London in the 1950s, 'said Melvin. The London of my youth,' added Carlyle a few meters behind us. I refused; I did not hear it coming. Melvin squeezed my hand, 'Are you going to talk?' Melvin asked.

I turned slightly to see Melchor's reaction. He met my gaze and smiled. 'I want to,' he replied.

'But to be honest I am a little late. The hospital called this morning - Dr. Snow is having a sick day. Besides, you know the story as well as I do,' he added, now smiling at Melvin. It is a different story - the daily worries of a city doctor who is in the middle of a debate about his early days in 17th century London. It was also fear-wracking to know that he was only speaking aloud for my benefit. After the others smiled at me, Melchor left the room. I stared at the small picture of Melchor city for a long

time, 'What's next? I asked Melvin who was looking at me. 'When did he find out what happened to him?' He looked at the pictures again, and I saw which pictures piqued his interest. It is the bigger part of the autumn colors - space.

'When he saw what was going on,' Melvin said quietly, 'he fought it. He tried to destroy himself. But that is not easy to do.' 'What's going on?' I did not want to say it aloud, but this word surprised me, 'He jumped from a good height,'

Melvin said in a deep voice. 'He tried to drown himself in the ocean... but he was too young and too strong for a new life. Amazingly, he fought at such an early age... he fed... Instinct stronger, then he took.

Everything on his own, but he was rejected by himself to have the strength to try to starve to death. Is it possible? 'My voice is weak: 'No, there is extraordinarily little that will kill us. I opened my mouth to ask, but he said in front of me: 'That's why he is so hungry, and that is why he is

drunk strength. six months. At night, looking for the loneliest place, hating himself. The bad wolf he was afraid of, didn't he eat meat in his previous life? In the next month, his new thinking appeared, he could live without ghosts, see himself. and' use his time well. He is always intelligent, and eager to learn.

Now he has unlimited time ahead of him. He studies at night and prepares during the day. He swims in France and - 'He swims in France?' 'People always swim in the English

Channel, Lily, ' he told me patiently. Yes, I think. It sounds funny in that context. Go ahead.' 'Swimming is easy - 'Everything is easy for you,' I catch. He waits, he talks funny.' I will not interrupt again, I promise: 'He laughed and finished his sentence.' Because, technically, we do not need to breathe.' You - 'No, no, you promised.' He laughed, putting a cold finger on my lips. 'Do you want to hear the story or not?' 'You can't hit me like that and expect me not to say anything,' I complained to his finger.

He put his hand on my neck. My heartbeat in response, but I said, 'You should not breathe?' I asked, ' No, you are not. It is just a habit.' He shrugged.

'How long have you been breathing?' 'Forever, I think; I do not know. A little uncomfortable - bad.' 'A little uncomfortable,' I said. I did not care about my expression, but there was something in his darkness. He put his hand on it. side and stand up, his eyes looked at my face. The silence stretched. His features are

still stone. 'What is it?' I whispered, touching his face changed. He softened. into my arms and sighed. 'I have been waiting for this to happen.' 'Why?' 'I know that sometimes I must tell you something or something that you see happening. Then you ran away from me screaming as you walked.' He smiled half-smiling, but his eyes were profoundly serious.

'You cannot stop me. I want this to happen because I want you to be at peace. I still want to be with

you. The two thoughts cannot be reconciled... 'He looked at me and walked away. I waited. 'I'm not running anywhere,' I promise. See you later,' he said and smiled again. I do not like it.' So forward-Melchor swimming in France. 'He went back to his story, he stopped. Thinking, his eyes looked at another picture - a storm. more colorful. luxuriously framed by all, and the greatest; it is twice as wide as the door hanging on the side of the canvas. The bright images of the robes swirling around

the large stones and the balcony., and medicine at night and called himself, his penance, in this, save people's lives.' He taught perfectly. come, almost good. 'I cannot explain the exit enough; it took him two hundred years of challenging work to maintain his perfect self. Now he just smells human blood and can do what he wants without suffering. He found so much peace there, going to the hospital…'

Melvin investigated space for a long time. He suddenly

remembered his purpose. She touched her finger on the big picture in front of us: 'She studied in Italy and found others there. They have more wisdom and education than the women in the ruler's water in London.' He touched the quartet at a high price, painted on the upper balcony, calmly watching the chaos below them. that I know the golden-haired man: 'Solimene Melchor is inspired by her friends. She always pulls them as gods or fallen angels,' laughs Melvin. ' Mazel, Ava, Leah,'

he said, pointing to the other three, two with black hair, one white as snow. 'Nocturnal patrons of art.' 'What happened to them?' With my finger an inch from the picture on the canvas, I thought aloud, 'They're still there.' He shrugged. 'Who knows how many millennials. Carlyle was with them for a brief time, only a few years. He was proud of their progress and kindness, but they tried to correct him of his denial of the place of 'Food,' as they called it.

They tried to convince him, and he tried to convince them but failed. At this time, Carlyle decided to try the New World. He wants to find someone like him. He is very lonely, you see. 'He has not seen anyone for a long time. However, as the animals became subjects of the fairies, he found that he was able to communicate with humans without faith as if they were one of his own. He started training in medicine. But the company he wants to avoid, he cannot risk the people know. He had

an idea floating in his head for years and almost decided to do it - because he could not find it. he will be a woman. He did not know exactly how his conversion happened, so he refused.

And he is afraid to steal the life of anyone like him. There is no hope for me; I am in a church with dead people. He takes care of my parents and knows that I am alone. He decided to try…' His voice, a smile, trailed off. He was looking out the west window. I wonder what

images fill his mind right now, memories of Melchor or himself. I waited in silence. turned to me 'So we came full,' he said, a beautiful smile. 'So, you win against Melchor? Always.' I looked at the wall of pictures and wondered if I could hear more stories, Melvin did not say anything as he walked into the room, so I asked: 'Almost?'

He sighed as if he did not want to. answer, please call me not sold on his abstinent lifestyle and upset him for controlling my

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understand why he lived the way he did. It just took me a few years to go back to Melchor and reconnect with his vision. of my victim, I can offend innocent people and only seek evil. I would not be different if I were in the dark street where he chased and saved 'I shuddered as I vividly thought of what he described: the dark street, The scared woman, the black man behind him. And Edoardo, when Edoardo sought, terrible and noble like a young god, could not stop.

Thank you, or more before? 'But as time passed, I saw the ghost in my eyes. I cannot erase the debt of so many lives lost, no matter how necessary. And I went back to Melchor and Karly. I got back to making more money. still, what I deserve.' We stopped at the door at the end of the house. My room,' he told me, opened it, and pulled me inside.

His room faced south, with a window the size of a wall like the great room below. The entire back of

the house must be glass. His attitude was despised Monongahela River injured, unexpectedly across the forest to the Olympic range. The mountains were closer than I thought. The west wall was completely covered with shelf after shelf of CDs. His room was nicer than a music store. In the corner was a high-end sound system, the kind I was afraid to touch because I was sure I would break something.

There was no bed, only a wide and attractive black leather

sofa. The floor was covered with a thick golden carpet, and the walls were hung with heavy fabrics in a slightly darker shade.' Sound good?' I suppose. He shrugged and shook his head. He took the remote control and turned on the stereo. It was quiet, but the soft jazz number was like a band in our room. I went to check out his amazing music collection.' How did you manage this one?' I asked, I could not find a rhyme or reason for the theme. He did not pay attention. 'Um, for a year, and then

by personal choice within the system,' he said absently. I turned around, and he looked at me with a sad look in his eyes.' What?' 'I was happy to feel…relief. Since you know everything, you do not have to keep secrets to yourself. I could feel more than that. I love it. It makes me… happy.'

He took a breath while smiling a little, 'I'm happy,' I replied with a smile. I would be worried that he would regret telling me these things. It is a good thing it was not.

But then, as his eyes caught my words, his smile disappeared, and his face froze. 'You're still waiting to run and cry, aren't you?' I suppose. A faint smile touched his lips, and he nodded. 'I hate to break your light bulb, but you are not as scary as you think. I do not think you are scary at all,' I said. Normal. He paused, furrowing his brows in disbelief. Then he gave a wide evil smile. 'You really shouldn't have said that' he whispered. He growled, a faint sound

in the back of his throat; her lips curled over her perfect teeth.

His body suddenly moved, he was half bent, like a lion about to pounce. I turned my back on him and shouted. 'You could not. I did not see him fly - he was so fast. I was suddenly in the air, then we hit the sofa, hit the wall. All the while, his arms formed a protective iron cage around me - I shook so much. But I was still breathing as I tried to straighten myself. He did not have it. He rolled me into a ball against his

chest, and I was stronger than iron chains. I stared at him in surprise, but he was well below control, his jaw dropped, and he smiled, his eyes cheerful but humorous.' he growled playfully.'

That you are such a horrible monster,' I said, my pain muffled a little by my breathless voice.' Better,' he admitted.' I was struggling. 'Can I get up now?' He smiled. but.' 'Can we get in?' came a soft voice from the hall. I struggled to pull away, but Melvin just

readjusted me, so I was more comfortable on his lap. All I saw was Naddalin Natalie, then, with Jae behind her in the doorway. My cheeks burned, but Melvin seemed to calm down.'

Melvin still laughed quietly. Naddalin Natalie found nothing unusual in our reception; he walked dancing, his movements graceful, to the center of the room, where he returned to sink to the floor. However, Jae was standing in the doorway, his expression slightly

surprised. She looked at Melvin's face, wondering if he was tasting heaven with his unusual sensitivity. 'You looked like you Lily had for lunch, and we came to see if you wanted to share,' Naddalin Natalie announced. I froze for a moment, until I realized Melvin was smiling- whether it was at his comment or my reaction, I could not tell.' I am sorry, I do not think I have enough,' he replied., his hands and I locked carelessly.

'Actually,' Jae said, smiling despite himself as he walked into the room, 'Naddalin Natalie says that tonight there is a real storm coming, and Dejen plays ball. What is the game?' The words were familiar enough, but the context confused me. However, I noticed that Naddalin Natalie was more believable than the weathercaster. Melvin's eyes lit up, but he hesitated. 'Of course, you have to bring Lily,' shouted Naddalin Natalie. I thought I saw Jae give her a quick glance.

'Do you want to go?' Melvin asked me, excited, his expression sharp.' For sure. I could not give up such a face. 'Um, where are we going?' 'We'll have to wait for the thunder to play ball-you'll see why,' he promised. 'Will I need an umbrella?' All three laughed aloud.' What? Jae asked Naddalin Natalie.' He was positive. 'The storm will hit the city. It must be very dry in the rain.' Good, then.' The passion in Jae's voice was of course captivating. I was curious myself, instead of

scared.' We will see if Melchor comes.' Naddalin Natalie stood up and headed for the door in a way that would break any Bellina's heart. If you do not know,' Jae whispered, and they were quickly on their way. Jae closed the door nonchalantly behind her.' What are we going to play?' I asked. 'You'll see,' Melvin explained. 'We will play Kickball.' I rolled my eyes. 'Vampires like Kickball?' 'It's America's game,' he said with mock respect.

17 Remembrance

He took me back to what Melchor called his office. He stood outside the door for a moment. 'Come in,' Melchor's voice said. Melvin opened the door to a high-ceilinged bedroom with a tall west-facing window. The back wall is covered with dark wood - where it can be seen.

Most of the wall space was taken up by tall bookshelves that towered over my head and held more books than I had ever seen outside of

a library. Melchor sat in a leather chair behind a large red desk. He just marked the pages of the thick volume he held. The room was exactly what I had always imagined a college principal would look like - only Melchor looked too young to fit. 'What can I do for you?' - he asked happily, standing up from his seat. 'I want to tell Lily some of our stories,' Melvin said. Your story. 'We did not mean to bother you,' 'I am sorry. Not quite. Where do you start?' Wagoner,' Melvin answered putting

the light on my shoulder and turning me towards the door we had just entered. Every time he touches me, even in the most casual way, my heart responds. Melchor was acting strangely there.

The wall we are facing today is different from the others. Instead of books, this wall is filled with paintings of all sizes, some in bright colors, others in dull monochrome. I was looking for some reason, some common motif connection for the collection, but my

quick search did not find it. Melvin pulled me to the left, standing in front of a small square oil painting in a simple wooden frame. It does not happen on bigger and brighter things; painted in different shades of sepia, it depicts a small town with steep roofs, with towers on top of several towers. The first floor has a wide river around a bridge covered with buildings that look like small cathedrals. London in the 1950s, 'said Melvin. The London of my youth,' added Carlyle a few meters

behind us. I refused; I did not hear it coming. Melvin squeezed my hand, 'Are you going to talk?' Melvin asked.

I turned slightly to see Melchor's reaction. He met my gaze and smiled. 'I want to,' he replied. 'But to be honest I am a little late. The hospital called this morning - Dr. Snow is having a sick day. Besides, you know the story as well as I do,' he added, now smiling at Melvin. It is a different story - the daily worries of a city doctor who is in the middle of a debate about his early days in 17th

century London. It was also fear-wracking to know that he was only speaking aloud for my benefit. After the others smiled at me, Melchor left the room. I stared at the small picture of Melchor city for a long time, 'What's next? I asked Melvin who was looking at me.

'When did he find out what happened to him?' He looked at the pictures again, and I saw which pictures piqued his interest. It is the bigger part of the autumn colors - the empty space. 'When he saw what was

going on,' Melvin said quietly, 'he fought it. He tried to destroy himself. But that is not easy to do.' 'What's going on?' I did not want to say it aloud, but this word surprised me, 'He jumped from a good height,' Melvin said in a deep voice. 'He tried to drown himself in the ocean... but he was too young and too strong for a new life. Amazingly, he fought at such an early age... he fed... Instinct stronger, then he took. Everything on his own, but he was rejected by

himself to have the strength to try to starve to death. Is it possible?

'My voice is weak: 'No, there is extraordinarily little that will kill us. I opened my mouth to ask, but he said in front of me: 'That's why he is so hungry, and that is why he is drunk strength. six months. At night, looking for the loneliest place, hating himself. The bad wolf he was afraid of, didn't he eat meat in his previous life? In the next month, his new thinking appeared, he could live without ghosts, see himself. and' use

his time well. He is always intelligent, and eager to learn. Now he has unlimited time ahead of him. He studies at night and prepares during the day. He swims in France and - 'He swims in France?'

'People always swim in the English Channel, Lily, ' he told me patiently. Yes, I think. It sounds funny in that context. Go ahead.' 'Swimming is easy - 'Everything is easy for you,' I catch. He waits, he talks funny.' I will not interrupt again, I promise: 'He laughed and

finished his sentence.' Because, technically, we do not need to breathe.' You - 'No, no, you promised.' He laughed, putting a cold finger on my lips. 'Do you want to hear the story or not?' 'You can't hit me like that and expect me not to say anything,' I complained to his finger. He put his hand on my neck.

My heartbeat in response, but I said, 'You should not breathe?' I asked, ' No, you are not. It is just a habit.' He shrugged. 'How long have you been breathing?' 'Forever, I

think; I do not know. A little uncomfortable - bad.' 'A little uncomfortable,' I said. I did not care about my expression, but there was something in his darkness. He put his hand on it. side and stand up, his eyes looked at my face. The silence stretched. His features are still stone.

'What is it?' I whispered, touching his face changed. He softened. into my arms and sighed. 'I have been waiting for this to happen.'

'Why?'

'I know that sometimes I must tell you something or something that you see happening. Then you ran away from me screaming as you walked.' He smiled half-smiling, but his eyes were profoundly serious. 'You cannot stop me. I want this to happen because I want you to be at peace. I still want to be with you. The two thoughts cannot be reconciled ... 'He looked at me and walked away. I waited. 'I'm not running anywhere,' I promise.

See you later,' he said and smiled again. I do not like it.' So forward-Melchor swimming in France. 'He went back to his story, he stopped. Thinking, his eyes looked at another picture - a storm. more colorful. luxuriously framed by all, and the greatest; it is twice as wide as the door hanging on the side of the canvas. The bright images of the robes swirling around the large stones and the balcony., and medicine at night and called himself, his penance, in this, save people's

lives.' He taught perfectly. come, almost good.

'I cannot explain the exit enough; it took him two hundred years of challenging work to maintain his perfect self. Now he just smells human blood and can do what he wants without suffering. He found so much peace there, going to the hospital…' Melvin investigated space for a long time. He suddenly remembered his purpose. She touched her finger on the big picture in front of us: 'She studied in Italy

and found others there. They have more wisdom and education than the women in the ruler's water in London.' He touched the quartet at a high price, painted on the upper balcony, calmly watching the chaos below them. that I know the golden-haired man: 'Solimene Melchor is inspired by her friends. She always pulls them as gods,' laughs Melvin. ' Mazel, Ava, Leah,' he said, pointing to the other three, two with black hair, one white as snow. 'Nocturnal patrons of art.' 'What happened to

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18 THURSDAY

It was starting to rain when Melvin turned onto my driveway. Until then, I did not doubt that he would be with me when I was only

playing a few games in the real world.

-And-

Then I saw a black car, a disheveled Ford, parked in Charlie's driveway - and I heard Melvin muttering something inaudible in a low, angry voice. Leaning away from the rain on the shallow porch, Chiaz Naztherth stood behind his father's wheelchair. Billy's face was stone-faced as Melvin pulled my car over to the side of the road. Chiaz looked; his face sad. Melvin's voice was

incredibly angry. 'It crosses the line.' 'He came to warn Charlie?' I thought, more horrified than angry. Melvin just nodded, replying to Billy staring into the rain with teary eyes. Leave me alone,' I replied. Melvin's black light worried me.

I was surprised that he agreed. 'C 'That's good. Be careful, the kid does not know.' I was a little shaken by the word child. 'Chiaz isn't much younger than me,' I reminded him. He looked at me, his anger suddenly gone. 'Oh, I know,' he

assured me with a smile. I sighed and put my hand on the door. 'Come in,' he instructed, 'so I can go, I'll be back in the evening.' » Do you want my car? I offered, wondering how to explain it to Charlie. 'I can walk home faster than this car can go.' 'You don't have to leave,' I said sadly. He smiled at my frustration. 'I do. When you get rid of it' - he threw a dark look at the black people - 'you must prepare Charlie to meet your new boyfriend. He smiled widely, showing all his teeth. I groaned.

'Thank you very much. He smiled that crooked smile I love. 'I'll be back soon,' he promised. His eyes returned to the balcony, then he leaned down to kiss me quickly on the bottom of my jaw. My heart was pounding, and I looked out onto the balcony. Billy's face It was no longer a crime, and his hands gripped his seat. Soon, 'I nodded and opened the door and stepped out into the rain. I felt his eyes on my back as I passed between the lights that lit the balcony. Bye, Billy. Hello Chiaz. I

received them warmly. 'Charlie's gone for the day - I hope you didn't wait too long.' 'Soon,' said Billy modestly. His black eyes were piercing. 'I just wanted to say that.'

He pointed to the brown paper bag on his forehead. Thank you,' I said, even though I had no idea what it might be. 'Why don't you just come over for a minute and dry it off?' I acted like I was not being searched when I opened the door and waved to them in front of me. Here, let me get this,' I offered,

turning to close the door. I let him take one last look at Melvin. He waited, quietly, his eyes reverent. You will want to put it in the fridge,' said Billy, handing me the package.

'It's part of Harry Clearwater's Homemade Fish Fry - Charlie's favorite.' The refrigerator keeps it dry. He nodded. Thank you,' I repeated, but with emotion this time- 'I was running out of new ways to prepare fish, and he should bring more home tonight. » Fishing again? Billy asked with a twinkle in his eye.

'Under the usual place?' I should run if I see him.' 'No,' I lied quickly, my face tightening.

'He was going somewhere... but I do not know where. it made him think better.' Jake,' he said, still looking at me, 'Why don't you get Becky's new picture out of the car? I leave it to Charlie.' Where are they? I looked at him, but he was looking down, his eyebrows coming together. I saw him in the trunk,' Billy said, 'You can dig that up. Chiaz dug the rain. Billy and I looked at each other

in silence. After a few seconds the silence became awkward, I turned and walked towards me, heading into the kitchen. I could hear his wet wheels hitting the linoleum as he followed. The bag climbed onto the top shelf of the fridge and walked away.

He went around to meet him. His deeply lined face was unreadable. Charlie will not be back for a long time. My words were almost rude. He nodded in agreement but said nothing. Thanks

again for the fish fry,' I pointed. He continued to shake his head. I sighed and crossed my arms over my chest. I had left out small matters. 'Lily,' he said, then hesitated. I waited. Lily, said, Charlie, is one of my best friends. Yes. He enunciated each word carefully in his strong voice. 'I see you have been spending time together with one of the Shezor.

'Yes,' I repeated dryly. His eyes narrowed. 'It is none of my business, but I do not think it is such a clever idea. 'You're right,' I agreed.

'It is none of your business. He raised his gray eyebrows at my words. 'You do not know this, but the Shezor family has a bad reputation in this place. 'I did,' I told him in a harsh tone. This surprised him. But we cannot get that reputation, can we? Because the Shezor have never set foot on the reservation, have they? I saw my faintest reminder of the bond they both built and protected his tribe pulled at him. True,' he ran, his eyes alert. 'You seem... knowledgeable about the Shezor.'

More knowledgeable than I expected. I looked at him.

'And 'More knowledgeable than you. He pursed his thick lips at the thought. 'Perhaps,' he allowed, but his eyes were wary. 'Does Charlie know?' He found a weakness in my armor. 'Charlie loves the Shezor,' I said. He understood my escape perfectly. my story,' he said. 'But maybe it's Charlie.' 'Even though it's my business, again, I guess it's Charlie's business, right?'

I wondered if he even understood my question because I was trying not to say anything incriminating. He thought about this while the rain was hitting the roof, the only sound that disturbed the silence.' Yes,' he finally agreed. 'I guess that's your job too.' I sighed in peace. 'Thank you, Billy. 'Just think about what you're doing, Lily,' he urged. Well, I quickly agreed. He frowned. 'I mean, do not do what you are doing. I looked into his eyes, filled with nothing but concern for

me, and there was nothing I could say. Immediately the front door slammed, and I jumped at the sound. There are no pictures anywhere in this car. Chiaz's mumbled voice reached us before he did.

The shoulders of his shirt were stained with rain, and his hair was dripping as he rounded the corner. Hmm,' Billy got angry, pulled away, and turned his chair to face his son. 'I left it at home. Chiaz rolled his eyes in surprise. 'Okay, Lily, tell Charlie' - Billy paused before

continuing - 'that we stopped, I mean.' I will, I whispered. Chiaz was surprised. 'Are we going already?' 'Charlie's out late,' Billy explained as he passed Chiaz. Ah! Chiaz looked upset. 'Well, I'll see you next time, Lily.' Yes, I agreed. Be careful,' Billy warned me. I did not answer. Chiaz helped his father. I waved a little, quickly looked at my empty car, then closed the door before they left. I stood in the hallway for a minute, listening to the sound of their car as it pulled up and drove off. I stayed

where I was, waiting for the anger and anxiety to pass. After the tension subsided a little, I went upstairs to change my clothes.

I have tried a few different tips, but I am not sure what to expect tonight. As I focused on the future, what had just happened became less important. Now that I was removed from Jae and Melvin's influence, I began to take revenge for not being afraid before. I quickly gave up on choosing an outfit-discarding the old flannel shirt and jeans-knowing I

would be in my raincoat all night. The phone rang and I ran downstairs to pick it up. There was only one voice I wanted to hear; anything else would be offensive. But I knew that if he wanted to talk to me, he could show up in my room. 'Hello? I asked breathlessly. Lily? It is me,' Charity-Anna said. Oh, hey, Anny.

I struggled for a moment to come back to reality. It felt like months instead of days before I talked to Anny. 'How was the dance?' It was so much fun.! Charity-Anna

ran. Not needing any further instruction, she began to describe the last night minute by minute. But it was not easy to focus on Charity-Anna, Buddy, the dance, the school - they all seemed incomprehensible while my eyes were staring out the window, trying to judge the size of the light behind the heavy clouds.' Did you hear what I said, Lily?' Anny asked angrily. 'I'm sorry, what?' I said, "Buddy, kissed me! Can you believe it?' 'That's amazing, Anny,' I said, 'So what did you do yesterday?'

Charity-Anna protested, still looking worried because I was not interested. Nothing. I just went outside to enjoy the sun. I heard Charlie's car in the garage. 'Have you heard anything else from Melvin Shezor?'

The front door closed, and I heard Charlie knocking at the bottom of the stairs. to put his gears. 'Um I'm late, I can't remember what my story was.' Hi, kiddo!' Charlie called to me as he went to the kitchen. I waved at him. Anny heard his voice. 'Oh, your father. here. Do not worry,

we will talk tomorrow. See you at Trig.' 'See you, Anny. I hung up. Hey, dad, I say. He was rubbing his hands in the sink. 'Where's the fish?' 'I have put it in the freezer. I am going to get a few pieces before they dry out - Billy brought down some Harry Clearwater fish this evening. I worked to look happy. He did that?' Charlie's eyes lit up.

'It is my favorite. Charlie cleaned up and made dinner. Before long we were sitting at the table, eating in silence. Charlie enjoyed his

meal. I was very confused about how to accomplish my task, and I struggled to find a way to answer this question. 'What did you do to yourself today?' he asked, taking my mouth out. Well, this afternoon I was wandering around the house...' The latest episode of this evening. I tried to keep my voice clear, but my stomach was empty. 'And this morning I was at the Shezor. Charlie dropped his fork. The place of Dr. Shezor? he asked in surprise. I acted

like I did not see what he did. 'Yeah.' 'What were you doing there?'

He had not picked up his fork.' Well, I dated Melvin Shezor tonight, and he wanted me to introduce him to his parents... Dad? 'It looked like Charlie had an aneurysm. 'Dad, are you okay?' 'Are you dating Melvin Shezor? ', he exclaimed. Uh-oh. 'I thought you liked the Shezor.' 'He's too old for you,' he pushed. We are all teenagers,' I corrected, even though he was more right than he was. I

thought so. Wait...' He paused. and Edwin?' Melvin is the last one, with brown hair. Beautiful, Divine... 'Oh, well, that's it.' - he struggled, - 'well, I think. I do not like the look of this old man. I am sure he is a nice guy and all, but he also seems...mature to you. Is this Edwin your boyfriend?'

'It's Melvin, daddy.' 'Is he?' 'In a way, I guess.' You said last night you were not interested in any of the boys in town. But he picked up his fork again, so I thought the worst was over. Yes. Melvin's out of town,

man. He gave me a scornful look as he chewed. And yet, I went on, just started a little, you know. Do not embarrass me with all the dating talk, okay?' 'When will they come?' 'He'll be here in a few minutes.' 'Where are they taking you?' I moaned loudly. His face fell, then he laughed. 'You must really like this man,' he said rudely. I sighed and rolled my eyes for her benefit.

I heard an engine parked in front of the house. I jumped up and started cleaning my dishes. 'Leave

the dishes, I can wash them tonight.' He has robbed me a lot. The doorbell rang and Charlie ran to answer it. I was half the speed behind him. I did not realize how hard it was to lose. Melvin stood in the light of the balcony, looking like a male model in a raincoat commercial. Come in, Melvin. I felt relieved when Charlie got his name right. 'Thank you, King Rabbit,' Melvin said in a respectful tone. Keep calling me Charlie. Here, I will get your jacket.' 'Thank you, sir.' 'Sit there, Melvin. I complained.

Melvin floated to the only chair and forced me to sit next to Chief Black on the sofa. I glared at him quickly. He blinked behind Charlie. So, I heard you are going to let my daughter watch Kickball. It is only in Washington that the fact that it is raining does not matter at all for outdoor sports. 'Yes, sir, that was the plan. He was not surprised that I told my father the truth. But he might listen. 'Well, I think, give you more power.' Charlie smiled, and Melvin agreed. 'Okay.' I stood up. 'Enough

humor at my expense. Now we are going to drive.' I went back down the hall and put on my coat.

They follow. 'It won't be too late, Lill.' 'Don't worry, Charlie, I'll get home early,' Melvin assured me. 'You take care of my girls, okay? I moan, but they ignore me.' She will be safe with me, I promise, sir. Charlie could not doubt Melvin's sincerity, it rang in every word. I strode out. They all laughed, and Melvin followed me. I died on the porch. Behind my car, there is a

monster jeep. The tires are taller than my waist. There are metal covers on the headlights and taillights, and four headlights are mounted on the crash bars. The hardtop is shiny red. Charlie let out a low whistle. Fasten your seat belt,' he said, choking. Melvin followed me to my side and opened the door. I measured the distance to my seat and was ready to jump on. He sighed, then took me in with one hand, I hope Charlie had not noticed. I tried to fasten my seat belt as he walked

over to the driver's side at a normal human pace. But there were too many buttons. What is going on?' I opened the door and asked.

This is an off-road seat belt. 'Uh-oh.' I tried to find the right spot to install all the buckles, but it was not fast. He sighed again and reached out to help me. I am glad the rain was so heavy that I could not see Charlie on the porch. That meant I could not see Melvin's hand on my neck, stroking my collarbone. I gave up helping him and focused on not

hyperventilating. Melvin turned the key and the engine roared. We left the house. This is a… Well…you have a big jeep.' 'It is Dejen's. I did not think you would want to run all the way.' 'Where do you keep this thing?' We converted one of the outbuildings into a garage.' 'Aren't you wearing your seat belt?' what is there. 'Run all the way? Like, we still must run part of the way? My voice is a few octaves higher. He gives a wry smile. 'You're not going to run.' 'I am going to be sick. 'Close your eyes and you

will be fine. 'I bit my lip, fighting back my panic. He leaned over and kissed my upper body.' He nodded, then moaned. I looked at him puzzled. 'You smell really good in the rain,' he explained. 'Is it good or bad?' I asked cautiously. He sighed. 'Both.' I do not know how he found his way in the darkness and the downpour, but somehow, he found a trail that was not a road, more like a mountain road. Could not talk for a long time as I bounced up and down the seat like a jackhammer.

However, he enjoyed the ride and had a good laugh along the way. Then we came to the end of the road; trees formed green walls on three sides of the jeep. The rain was just a drizzle, getting smaller in a second, the sky getting brighter through the clouds. 'Sorry, Lily, we have to go from here.' 'You know what? I will be waiting here.' 'What's wrong with your courage?' 'I haven't forgotten last time.' Could it be just yesterday? He was vaguely beside me, and he started to unbutton me. I

will get them, you go on,' I protested. Um...' He finished quickly. 'Looks like I'm going to have to manipulate your memory.'

Before I could react, he pulled me out of the jeep and put my feet on the ground. There is almost no fog now; Naddalin Natalie would be right. 'Manipulating my memory?' I asked nervously. 'About that. He looked at me intently, carefully, but there was humor deep in his eyes. He put his hands on the jeep on either side of my head and leaned forward,

forcing me to push the door back. He got closer.

Now, his face is inches from mine. There is no escape for me.' Now,' he breathed, only his scent disrupted my thought process, 'what are you worried about? 'Well, well, hit a tree-' I swallowed'-and died. Then get sick. 'He smiled back.' Then he lowered his head and moved his cold lips gently to the hollow at the base of my neck. 'Are you still worried now?'

He murmured against my skin. 'Of course. I had a challenging time concentrating.' About hitting trees and getting sick. 'His nose ran along the skin of my neck all the way to my chin. His icy breath made my skin itch. 'And now?' 'He whispered his lips against my chin. 'Trees,' I gasped. 'Rat disease.' He raised his face and kissed my eyelids. 'Lily, you don't really think I'm going to hit a tree, do you?' ' 'No, but I can.' There was no confidence in my voice. He smelled easy victory. He kissed my

cheek slowly and stopped at the corner of my mouth. 'Am I going to let a tree hurt you?' His lips barely touched my quivering lower lip. 'No,' I held my breath. I know there is a second part to my great defense, but I cannot quite take it back. Look, he said, his lips moving towards mine. 'There's nothing to be afraid of, is it?' 'No,' I sighed and gave up.

Then he took my face roughly and kissed me earnestly, his firm lips against mine. There really is no excuse for my actions. Obviously,

I know better now. However, I cannot stop reacting like the first time. My arm did not stay still, but stretched out and wrapped tightly around his neck, and I was suddenly welded to his statue. I sighed and parted my lips. He staggered back and broke free from my hand effortlessly. 'Damn it, Lily!' he interrupted, gasping for breath.

'You'll be my death; I swear you will.' I leaned forward, placing my hands on my knees for support. 'You're indestructible,' I whispered,

trying to catch my breath. 'Maybe I thought that before I met you. Now it is stupid for us to get out of here before I do,' he growled. He threw me on his back like before and I can see he needs extra Trying to be as gentle as he is. I locked my legs around his waist and pinned my arms around his throat.'

Do not forget to close your eyes. he warned sternly. I quickly buried my face in his shoulder blades, under my own arms, and closed my eyes. I could barely see us

moving. I could feel him sliding down below. I, but he can walk on the pavement with a smooth movement. I was tempted to peek just to see if he flew through the woods like before, but I resisted. It was not worth the horrible dizziness. I was content with it Listen to his breathing come and go evenly. It was not until he reached out and stroked my hair that I was sure we had stopped. It is over, Lily.' I dared to open my eyes, and sure enough we were all standing still. I stiffly let go of the blackmail on his

body and slid from behind to the ground.

Ouch! 'I hit the wet ground, panting. He glared at me, obviously unsure if he was still angry, thought I was funny. But my confused look pushed him to the edge, and he laughed aloud. I got up and ignored him, I brushed the dirt off my body and panted off the back of my coat. It only made him laugh harder. Annoyed, I started walking into the woods. I felt his arms around my waist. Lily, you Where are you

going?'' Watching a Kickball game. You do not seem to be interested in playing, but I am sure everyone else would have an exciting time without you.' 'You're going in the wrong direction.' I did not look at him, I turned to the opposite go in the direction. He got me again. 'Don't be angry, I cannot help it. You should see your face.' He laughed before he could stop himself. Oh, are you the only one angry? 'I'm not mad at you.' ''Lily, you are the cause of my death'?' I quoted bitterly. 'It's just a

fact.' I tried to turn away from him again, but he caught me. 'You're crazy,' I insisted. Lily? He was suddenly tense, and all traces of teasing disappeared. 'Don't you understand?'

'See what?' I was confused by his sudden mood swing and his words. 'I am never mad at you-how could I? Brave, trusting...warm like you.' 'Then why?' I whispered, thinking of the dark emotions that pulled him away from me, and I have been Interpreting it as a well-

founded frustration-frustrated at my weakness, my dullness, my gruff human reaction... He put his hands lightly at the sides of my face. 'I let myself be upset,' he said softly. 'I cannot seem to avoid myself putting you in danger. My presence puts you in danger. Sometimes I really hate myself. I should be stronger; I should be able to-' I put my hand on his mouth. 'Don't.' He took my hand and moved it from his lips but held his face. I love you, he said. 'It's a terrible excuse for what I've made,

but it's still true.' It was the first time he said he loved me - in a lot of words. He did not realize it, but I did. 'Now try to express yourself,' he continued, leaning over, and brushing my lips lightly. I keep incredibly quiet. Then I sighed.

'You promised Chief Black that you would send me home early, remember?' We'd better go.' 'Yes, ma'am.' He smiled slyly, only letting go of one hand. He took me a few yards, through tall, wet ferns and drooping moss, around a giant

hemlock tree, and we were on the edge of a huge clearing atop Olympic Peak. It is twice as large as any Kickball field. I could see the others there; Karly, Dejen and Vivian were sitting on the bare slate, the closest to us, about a hundred meters away. Further afield, I could see Jae and Naddalin Natalie, who were at least a quarter of a mile apart, and they were throwing things back and forth, but I never saw the ball. It looks like Melchor is marking the base, but can they really be that far apart? When

we saw the three roses on the rock. Karly came up to us. Dejen watched Vivian's back for a long time and followed. Vivian stood up gracefully and strode toward the field without looking in our direction. In response, my stomach quivered anxiously.

'Did we hear Melvin?' Karly asked as she approached. Dejen clarified that it sounded like a bear was choking. I smiled suspiciously at Karly. 'He is.' 'Lily was unintentionally funny,' Melvin explained, quickly addressing the

issue. Naddalin Natalie has left her place and is running or dancing towards us. She rushed to a water stop under our feet. 'It's time,' she announced. 'As soon as she finished speaking, a deep thunder shook the forest behind us, and then smashed west toward town. Now we are driving.' Naddalin Natalie took Dejen's hand, and they rushed towards the oversized field; She runs like a gazelle. He is as graceful and fast as he is - but Dejen will never match the gazelle.

Are you ready to play?

Melvin asked, his eyes longing and bright. I try to sound quite enthusiastic. 'Go team up!' He giggled, and after stroking my hair, he jumped behind the other two. His driving was more aggressive, a cheetah rather than a gazelle, and he quickly passed them. The grace and power take my breath away. 'Are we going down?' Karly asked in her soft, melodious voice, and I realized I was staring blankly at him. I quickly put away my expression and nodded.

Karly kept a few feet between us. I do not know if she was still careful not to scare me. Her pace matched mine, but the pace did not seem impatient. Do you not play with them? I asked shyly.

'No, I prefer judgments - I like to keep them honest,' she explained. So, do they like to cheat? 'Oh yes - you should listen to their arguments!' I hope you do not, you will think they were raised by a pack of wolves. 'You sound like my mom,' I laughed in surprise. She laughed too.

'Well, I consider them my children.' in most respects. I can never get over my maternal instincts - did Melvin say I lost a child? No,' I muttered, stunned, trying to make sense of her life as she remembered. 'Yes, my first and only child. He died a few days after he was born, poor little thing,' she sighed, 'it breaks my heart-that's why I jumped off a cliff, you know,' she added matter-of-factly. Melvin just said Damn you,' I stammered. 'Always a gentleman.' She smiled. - Melvin is my first new son. I have

always thought of him that way, even though he is older than me, at least in one way. She smiled warmly at me.

'That's why I'm so glad he found you, honey.' 'The joy on her lips sounded natural. - He's been a weird guy for far too long. It hurts me to see him alone.' 'Do you mind then? I asked and hesitated again. - I... Wrong for him?' 'No.' She thought. 'You're what he wanted. Somehow everything will be fine,' she said, though her brows were

furrowed in worry. Another thunderstorm started. Karly stopped.

We are at the venue. Edge. Looks like they have joined forces. Melvin in left field, Melchor between first and second base, and Naddalin Natalie holding the ball, on what must be the pitcher's mound. Dejen waving an aluminum ball Great; it whistled almost untraceable in the air. I waited for him to get close to home plate, but when he got his feet, I realized he was already there - farther from the mound than I

thought Jae was standing a few meters behind him, catching the ball for the other team. Neither of them had gloves, of course.

'Okay,' Karly called in a clear voice that I knew Melvin could hear, no matter what. Where is he? 'Smear. 'Naddalin Natalie stood up straight, motionless. Her style was stealth rather than a terrifying knockout. She took the ball at her waist with both hands, and then, like the blow of a cobra, flicked her right hand, The ball fell into Jae's hands.

'Is it a strike? I whispered to Karly. 'If they don't strike, it's a strike,' she said. Jae threw the ball back into Naddalin Natalie's waiting hand. She gave herself a small smile. Then her hand spun out again, this time the bat somehow went around in time on the unseen ball. The rumbling sound was deafening; it echoed from the hills-I knew immediately the need for a thunderstorm. The ball streaked across the field like a shooting star and into the surrounding forest.

'Home run,' I muttered.

'Wait,' Karly warned, listening intently, one hand raised. Dejen was blurred around the base, Melchor following him. I realized Melvin was gone. Karly May shouted in a clear voice. I watched in disbelief as Melvin ran out of the tree with the ball in his outstretched hand, his smile even I could see. The game continued before my eyes in disbelief. Could not keep up with the speed of the ball, the speed with which their bodies ran across the

field. As Jae tried to avoid Melvin's impeccable pitch, I learned another reason for them to wait for a thunderstorm to hit a ground ball to Melchor. Melchor ran into the ball and then let Jae run to first base. When they collided, the sound was like the sound of two huge boulders falling. I jumped in horror, but somehow, they All fine. Of course,' Karly called in a calm voice. Dejen's team was one ahead - Vivian managed to get around the base after tagging one of Dejen's long flies

- and Melvin grabbed the third. He rushed over to me, glistening with excitement. 'What do you think?' He asked.

One thing is for sure, I cannot stand the boring old Kickball league anymore. 'It sounds like you've done so much before,' he laughed. 'I'm a little disappointed,' I joked. 'Why? he asked suspiciously. 'It would be great if I could find one thing you haven't done better than the rest of the planet.' He gave me his peculiarly crooked smile that took

my breath away. 'I'm up,' he said, walking to the plate. He played smartly, kept the ball low, away from Vivian's ready hands in the outfield, and struck two bases with lightning before Dejen brought the ball back into play.

Melchor hit an out-of-bounds hit so far - a thud that stings the ear - and he and Melvin went in. Naddalin Natalie gave them a delicious high five. The scores kept changing as the game went on, and they roared at each other like any

street player to turn with the leader. Sometimes Karly called them to order. The thunder rumbled, but we stayed dry, as Naddalin Natalie expected. Melchor was holding Melvin in her arms, and Naddalin Natalie suddenly gasped. My eyes were fixed on Melvin as usual, and I saw him look up at her sharply.

Their eyes met, and in an instant, there was a flow between them. Before anyone else could ask what was wrong with Naddalin Natalie, he was by my side. Karly's

voice was tense. 'I didn't see it-I can't tell,' she whispered. Everyone else is here.' What is the matter, Naddalin Natalie? asked Melchor in a calm authoritative voice. They were moving much faster than I thought. I know my previous opinion was wrong, she whispered. Jae leaned against her; his posture protective 'What's changed?' He asks.

'They heard us play and it changed their course,' she said regretfully, as if she felt responsible for anything that scared her. Seven

pairs of fast eyes flashed across my face and left. 'How fast?' Melchor said, turning to Melvin. A look of concentration crossed his face. 'Less than five minutes. They run-they want to play,' he growled. Can you handle it? 'Melchor asked him, his eyes flickering at me again. 'No, don't carry-' He stopped. 'Besides, the last thing we need is for them to catch the scent and start hunting.' 'How many? 'Dejen asked Naddalin Natalie. Three,' she answered

succinctly. three! He sneered. 'Let them come.'

A steely band of muscle curled along his thick arm. Melchor thought for a moment, and the moment seemed much longer than it really was. Only Dejen seemed unmoved; everyone else stared at Melchor's face band 'Let's get on with the game,' Melchor finally made up his mind. His voice was calm and even.' Naddalin Natalie said they were simply curious. 'You see, Karly,' he said. 'I will call now. 'He was

standing in front of me. The others returned to the field, carefully scanning the dark forest with sharp eyes. Naddalin Natalie and Karly were standing around me.

'Put your hair down,' Melvin said in a muffled voice. And the even voice said. I slid the rubber band from my hair obediently and dangled it around me. I said the obvious. 'Everyone else is here now.' 'Yes, keep quiet, keep quiet, do not move from me, please. He hid the pressure in his voice well, but I could hear it.

He pulled my long hair forward and wrapped it around my face. Come on.' It did not help,' Naddalin Natalie said softly, 'I could smell her across the field. ' 'I know. There was a hint of frustration in his tone. Melchor stood in front of the plate. The others joined the game half-heartedly. What did Karly ask you? I whispered, and he hesitated for a second before answering. 'If they're thirsty.'

'He muttered reluctantly. Minutes passed and the game was now playing in indifference. No one

dared to take a heavier shot than a stack, with Dejen, Vivian and Jae lingering in the infield. Every now and then, despite the fear numbing my brain, I realize Vivian's eyes are on me. They are expressionless, but there is something about her covering her mouth that makes me believe she is angry.

Melvin does not mind it at all. A game with eyes and minds stretching in the forest. 'Sorry, Lily,' he muttered viciously. - It is stupid and irresponsible to expose you like

this. I am sorry. I heard him hold his breath; His eyes turned to the field to the right. He took a half-step, stroking himself between me and what was about to happen. Melchor, Dejen, and others turned in the same direction, hearing sounds to my ears too weak.

19 Blood Sports

They appeared one after another from the edge of the forest, about ten meters apart. The first man to enter the clearing immediately backed away, leaving the other man

in front, positioning himself around the tall dark-haired man in a way that made it clear who was leading the crowd. The third is a woman, all I can see from this distance is that her hair is a dazzling red.

They closed ranks, then cautiously made their way towards Melvin's family, showing the natural respect a pack of predators have when encountering a larger, less familiar group of their own kind. As they got closer, I could see how different they were from the Shezor.

They walk like cats, a gait that always seems borderline crouching. They wore the usual backpacker gear: jeans and a casual button-up shirt of heavy, weather-resistant fabric. However, the clothes were frayed and frayed, and they were barefoot.

Both men had short hair, but the woman's bright orange hair was full of leaves and wood debris. Their piercing eyes carefully caught the more graceful and refined gestures of Melchor, who, flanking

Dejen and Jae, cautiously stepped forward to meet them. With no apparent communication between them, each of them sat up in a more relaxed and upright posture. The man in front was the handsomest, with olive skin, a typical pale underside, and shiny black hair. He is average height and muscular, sure, but he is nothing short of Dejen's strength. He smiled slightly, revealing a gleam of white teeth. The woman was wilder, her eyes moving endlessly between the man facing

her and the crowd around me, her tangled hair quivering in the breeze. His pose is resolutely feline. A second male hovered discreetly behind them, thinner than the leader, his light brown hair, and regular featureless features.

His eyes, though completely still, somehow seemed the most alert. Their eyes are also different. Not the gold or black I was expecting, but an eerie, sinister deep burgundy. The dark-haired man, still smiling, walked over to Melchor. We

thought we heard a match,' he said in a relaxed voice with the slightest French accent. 'My name is Emilyn, and this is Victoria and Pierre. He gestured to the vampire next to him. I am Melchor. These are my family, Dejen and Jae, Vivian, Karly and Naddalin Natalie, Melvin, and Lily.

He designated us in groups, deliberately without attracting personal attention. I was shocked when he said my name. Do you have room for a few more players? Emilyn asked nicely. Melchor matched

Emily's friendly tone. ', we have just finished. But we will be interested some other time. Are you going to be in the area too long?' ', we are going north, but we are curious to know who is around. 'I have not seen any company for a long time.

No, the area is empty except for us and occasional visitors like you. The tension slowly subsided and turned into a casual conversation. Jae, I assume, is using his special talents to control the situation. What is your hunting

ground? Emily asked casually. Melchor ignored the assumptions behind the investigation. We reserved permanent residence nearby. There is another permanent settlement like ours near Denali. Emily shook his body slightly. permanent? How did you do? There was honest curiosity in his voice. Why don't you come home with us so we can talk comfortably? 'Melchor invited. 'It is quite a long story. Pierre and Victoria exchange surprises at the mention of the word

'house', but Emily has more control over his expression. It looks remarkably interesting and exceedingly popular. His smile was kind. 'We went hunting from Ontario and have not had a chance to clean up in a while.

His eyes are on Melchor's polished exterior. No offense, but if you are not hunting in that area neighbor, we are appreciating it. We must keep a low profile, you know,' Melchor explained. certainly. John nodded. 'We will not invade your

territory. We are just eating out of Altoona anyway,' he said with a laugh. A shiver ran down my back. If you want to race with us, we will show you the way - Dejen and Naddalin Natalie, you can go buy a Jeep with Melvin and Lily,' he added casually. As Melchor spoke, three things were happening at once. My hair was ruffled in the breeze, Melvin stiffened, and the second man, Pierre, suddenly turned his head and looked intently at me, his nostrils burning. A wave of stiffness

descended on each of them, Pierre stepping forward, crouching. Melvin bared his teeth, crouched down to defend himself, and a wild growl escaped his throat. It was nothing like the playful sound I heard from him this morning. From my head to my head. back of my heels. What is it? Emilyn exclaimed, surprised.

Neither Pierre nor Melvin relaxed their aggressive posture. Pierre leaned slightly to the side Suitor; Melvin also changed position. She was with Melchor's firm refusal

was directed at Pierre Emilyn n Didn't seem to catch my scent as strongly as Pierre did, but now there is a realization on his face. Melvin growled more fiercely, harshly; his lips raised above his glistening bare teeth. Emilyn took another step back. I said she was with us,' Melchor corrected in a harsh voice. But she is human,' Emilyn protested. The words were not aggressive at all, just stunned. Yes. Dejen is very visible around Melchor, his eyes on Pierre. Pierre slowly straightened from his

squat, but his eyes never left mine, and his nostrils remained wide.

Melvin was as nervous as a lion in front of me. When Emilyn speaks, his tone is soothing - trying to defuse the sudden hostility. 'Looks like we have a lot to learn about each other. It is true. Melchor's voice is always cool. But we want to accept your invitation. He rolled his eyes at me and at Melchor. 'Good sure we will not hurt. human girl. We do not hunt in your area, as I said. Pierre looked up at Emilyn in disbelief, then

exchanged another look with Victoria, whose eyes were still twinkling face to face. Melchor watched Emily's public expression for a moment before speaking. 'We'll show you the way. Jae, Vivian, Karly?' he called. They were clustered together, blocking my view as they converged. Naddalin Natalie was immediately at my side, and Dejen slowly backed away, his eyes fixed on Pierre as he turned his back to us. Let us go, Lily.

Melvin's voice was low and dark. All the while, I was rooted to the spot, fearful that I was still. Melvin had to grab my elbow and pull hard to break my trance. Naddalin Natalie and Emmet followed close behind and hid from me. I stumbled over to Melvin, still terrified. I cannot hear if the main group is gone. Melvin's impatience was almost palpable as we moved at human speed to the edge of the forest. As soon as we got to the tree, Melvin held me on his back and did

not trip. When he left, I held on as hard as I could, and the others followed him. I kept my head down, but my eyes were wide open and scared and would not close. They walked through what is now the Black Forest like ghosts.

The excitement Melvin usually seemed to have as he ran was completely gone, replaced by an anger that washed over him and drove him even faster. Even though I had my back, others followed. We got to the jeep in an incredibly

abbreviated time and Melvin barely slowed down as he threw me into the back seat. Tie her up, he ordered Dejen, who slid in beside me. Naddalin Natalie was already in the front seat and Melvin was starting the engine. He groaned and we turned, turning to face the winding road.

Melvin growled something too fast for me. understand, but it sounded a lot like a litany of profanity. The bumpy ride was much worse, and the darkness only made it

more terrifying. Dejen and Naddalin Natalie stared out the side windows. We were on the main road, and although our speed increased, I could see where we were going better. We went south, away from McAuley. Where are we going? I asked. No one answered. No one even looked at me. I must get you out of here - away - now. He did not turn around, his eyes fixed on the road. The speedometer reads one hundred and five miles per hour. Revolve around!

You must take me home! I screamed. I struggled with this stupid seat belt, tearing the belt. Dejen,' Melvin said nonchalantly. Dejen stared at my hand in his steely grip. No! Melvin! No, you cannot do this. I must, Lily, please shut up now. I No! Charlie Go called the FBI!

They will be all over your family-Melchor and Karly! They need to go, hide forever!' 'Calm down, Lily. Her voice was cold. Not on me, you do not! You did not ruin everything for me! I struggled hard, to no avail.

Naddalin Natalie spoke for the first time. 'Melvin, pull over.' He gave her a hard look, then sped up. Melvin let us talk about it. You do not understand, he growled in frustration. I have never heard it so loud. It was deafening, within reach of a Jeep. The speedometer was approaching one hundred and fifteen. Reached? He is a stalker! I felt Dejen stiff beside me, and I wondered how he would react to the word. That made more sense to the three of them than to me. I want to.

know, but I did not get a chance to ask. Stop, Melvin. Naddalin Natalie's tone was reasonable, but there was a circle of authority in him that I had never heard of before.

An inch by inch of the speedometer is more than twenty points. Do it, Melvin. Listen to me, Naddalin Natalie. I saw his spirit. Stalking was his passion, his obsession - he wanted her, Naddalin Natalie - above all her. He started hunting tonight. He does not know where…' he interrupted. 'How long

do you think it will take him to walk around town through his scent? His pl year was already done before Emily could tell. I gasped, knowing where my scent would take me. 'Charlie! You cannot keep him there! You cannot leave him! I slammed the seat belt. She was right,' Naddalin Natalie said. The car slows down slightly. Let us take a minute and consider our options, coordinates Naddalin Natalie.

The car slows down again, more obviously, then we suddenly

shout and come to a stop on the shoulder of the freeway. headquarters. No choice,' Melvin hissed. I am not leaving Charlie! I am screaming. He completely ignored me. We must take her back,' Dejen said finally. He would not be able to touch her. He would wait. Dejen smiled. 'You do not see - you do not understand. Once he is committed to hunting, he is unwavering. We must kill him. Dejen does not seem bothered by the idea. 'It is a choice. 'There are also females. She is with

him. If it turns into a fight, the leaders will also accompany them. We have had enough. There is another option,' Naddalin Natalie said calmly.

Melvin turned to her angrily, his voice a harsh growl. 'There are - no - other - options!' 'Dejen and I both looked at him in shock, but Naddalin Natalie did not seem surprised. The silence lasted a long minute, Melvin and Naddalin Natalie staring at each other. I broke it. 'Anyone want to hear my plan?

'No,' Melvin growled. Naddalin Natalie glared at him, exasperated at last. Listen,' I begged. 'You take me back.'

'No,' he stopped. I named him and moved on. 'I will take you back. I told my dad I wanted to go home to Phoenix. I packed my bags. We waited until this tracker was watching, and then we ran. He would follow us and leave Charlie alone. Charlie, the FBI will not call your family. Then you can take me anywhere you want.' They stared at

me, surprised.' It is not a bad idea; it really is not a clever idea.' Dejen's surprise was an insult. 'It might work - and we cannot just leave her father naked. You know that said Naddalin Natalie. Everyone looked at Melvin. 'Too dangerous - I don't want him within a hundred miles of her.' Dejen was confident. 'Melvin, he didn't pass us.' Naddalin Natalie thought for a moment. 'I did not see him attack. He was going to try to wait for us to leave him alone.' It did not take long for him to know that was not going to

happen.' You asked me to take you home.' I tried to keep my voice steady. Melvin brought his fingers to his temples and squeezed his eyes shut. 'Please,' I said in a small voice. He did not look up. When he spoke, his voice sounded like a voice.' You are leaving tonight tracker visible or not. You tell Charlie you cannot stand another minute in McAuley. Tell him any story. Pack the first things that touch your hands, and then get in your car. I do not care what he tells you. You have fifteen minutes. Did

you hear me? Fifteen minutes from when you walk in the door.' The Jeep came to life, and he worked hard for us, the tires were the same. The speedometer needle began to race across the dial.' Dejen?' I asked, looking at my hands.' Ah, sorry.' He let me go. A few minutes passed in silence, except for the root of the machine. Then Melvin spoke again.' This is what happens. When we get home, without the tracker, I walk him to the door. Then he has fifteen minutes.'

He thanked me in the mirror for relighting. 'Dejen, get out of the house. Naddalin Natalie, get the car. I will live if he is inside. After he is out, you can take the Jews to the house and tell Melchor.’ 'No,' Dejen said. 'I am with you. 'Think, Dejen. I do not know how long I will be gone. 'Until we know how far, I am with you.' Melvin was silent. 'If the tracker is there,' he continued, 'we'll keep driving.' 'We'll do it right in front of him,' Naddalin Natalie said. Melvin accepted that.

No matter what problem he had with Naddalin Natalie, he did not hesitate now.' What are we going to do with the Jeep?' He asked. His voice was harsh. 'You take it home.' 'No, you're not,' he said calmly. The mindless stream of profanities began again. 'We can't get in my car,' I whispered. Melvin did not seem to hear me.' I think you guys should leave me alone,' I said more quietly. He heard that.' Lily, just do it, this time,' he said between gritted teeth.

'Listen, Charlie's not an idiot,' I protested. 'If you're not in town tomorrow, he'll be suspicious.' 'It is no use. We will make sure he is safe, and that is all that matters.' 'Then what about this tracker? Think about it He's with you, wherever you are.' Dejen looked at me, surprised again. 'Melvin, listen to him,' he urged. 'I think he's right.' 'Yes, he agreed,' Naddalin Natalie agreed.' 'I can't do that.' That is what Melvin sounds like.' Dejen should stay too,' I continued. 'He really caught Dejen.

'What?' Dejen turned to me. 'You'd better crack him if you stay,' Naddalin Natalie agreed. Melvin stared at her wonder. 'Do you think I should let him go?' Of course not,' said Naddalin Natalie. 'Jae will get him.' 'I can't do that,' Melvin repeated, but this time there was a hint of defeat in his voice. Logic worked on him. I tried to persuade. 'Stay here for a week -' I saw his expression in the mirror and changed '- a few days. Let Charlie know you

did not kidnap me and lead this Santiago on a wild goose chase.

Make sure there is no more he is in my way. Then come and meet me. Of course, go round and round, and then Jae and Naddalin Natalie can go home.' I could see he was starting to think about it.' Where will we meet?' Phoenix.' Of course.' No. He will hear that where you are going,' he said nonchalantly. 'And you are going to make it sound like a trick, obviously. He will know that we will know that he is listening. I do not

think I will ever say, 'He's the devil,' Dejen closed.

'And if that doesn't work?' There are several million people in Phoenix, 'I informed him.' It is not hard to find a phone book.' 'I'm not going home.' 'Ah?' he asked, a delicate ring in his voice.' I am old enough to get my own place.' 'Melvin, let's go with him,' Naddalin Natalie reminded him.' What are you going to do in Phoenix?' he asked in his weirdness.' Stay inside.' 'I'd love to.' Dejen thought about the corner

Santiago, no doubt.' Shut up, Dejen. Now, if only he could take her alone...' He traveled with a faint smile. I was right.

The Jews now crept slowly as we made our way into town. Despite my bold message, I felt the hair on my arms standing up. I thought of Charlie, alone at home, and I tried to be brave.' Lily.' Melvin's voice was incredibly soft. Naddalin Natalie and Dejen looked out their windows. 'If you let anything happen to yourself - I will

hold you accountable. Do you understand that? 'Yes,' I shuddered. He turned to Naddalin Natalie.' Can Jae make it?' Give him some credit, Melvin. She is doing well, given the circumstances.' 'Can you handle it?' she asked. And little Naddalin Natalie pursed her lips in a terrible snarl and let the loose snarled I sat in the chair startled. Melvin smiled at him. 'But keep your opinions straight,' he stopped abruptly.

20 GOODBYES

Charlie is waiting for me.

All the lights in the house are on. My mind wandered as I thought of a way to make it go away. It will not be fun. Melvin slows down and stays away from my car. They were all very alert, Ramrod sitting upright, listening to every sound of the wood, looking for every shadow, catching every shadow, catching every shadow, searching for something out of place. The machine cut off, and I sat down, indifferently, as they continued to listen, 'He's not here,'

said Melvin. 'Let go.' Dejen came over to help me from his stronghold. 'Don't worry Lily' in a low but cheerful voice, 'we'll get things sorted here in no time.' Moisture eyes as I looked at Dejen. I did not know much about him, but somehow, I never knew when I would see him after dark. I knew this was a faint taste of what I had to live with for the next hour, and the imagined tears began to flow.'

Naddalin Natalie, Dejen. Melvin's voice was a command. They

continued into the darkness, which disappeared immediately. Melvin opened the door and took my hand, then into the protection of his arm. He took me. He hurried me home, always clinging to the night.' Fifteen minutes, he warned his breath. 'I can do it.' I was concerned. I cried. I stood on the porch and held her face in my hand. I looked deeply into his eyes. 'I love you' I said in a low and strong voice.

'I will always love you, no matter what happens now.' 'You'll be

fine, Lily,' he said firmly. Just follow the plan, okay? Charlie keeps me safe. He does not love me. Like this, and I want to have a chance to apologize later.' 'Cheer up, Lily. We must hurry.' Immediately the voice.' 'One more thing,' I whispered to the audience. 'Don't listen to another word I say tonight!' He backed up, so all I had to do was reach out and kiss his lips with as much force as I could. Then I turned and kicked the door. Get out, Melvin!'

I ran inside and shut the door in her face. 'Lily?' Charlie hesitated in the living room and was on his feet. 'Leave me alone!' I yelled at him through my now streaming tears. I ran up the stairs to my room, opened the door, and closed it. I ran to my bed and grabbed my bag. I threw myself on the floor to grab it. I quickly reached between the mattresses and box springs to grab the old sock that contained my secret stash of money. Charlie was hanging on my door.' Lily, are you okay?

'What's going on?' Her voice was scared. 'I'm about to give birth,' I yelled, my voice breaking to a perfect pitch. 'Is she hurt?' His tone edged closer to anger. No!' I am a little shy. I turn to my clothes, and Melvin quietly slips them out of his hands and throws them at me.' Did he screw you up?'

Charlie was confused.' No!' I gasped slightly as I shoved everything into the bag. Melvin tossed the contents of another drawer at me. The bag was full now.'

Lily, what is wrong with you?' Charlie yelled at the door and yelled again. 'I'm out with him!' I yelled going to the zipper of my bag. Melvin's hands pushed me, and he calmly added the zipper. He held my hand tightly. 'I'm in the car - go!' he whispered and went to the door pushed me open. He cleared the window. I opened the door and passed Charlie, running up the stairs struggling with my heavy bag. 'What happened?' he shouted. He was behind me. 'I thought you liked it.'

He grabbed my elbow in the kitchen. Still surprised, his grip was still firm. He embraced me to see him, and I saw in his face that he had no intention of leaving. I could think of only one way of escape, and I hated myself thinking of it, as it would involve hurting him. But I had no time, and I had to wait for him. I cried to my father, fresh tears in my eyes for what I was about to do.' I want it -that ISIS the problem. I cannot take it anymore! I cannot download it here! I do not want. To

wrap up those trapped in this tube-like Mother City!

~*~

I never made the same mistake she did. I hate him-I cannot stay here another minute!' His hand fell on mine as I chose. I turned away from his shocked face and went to the door. 'Bells, you can't go out now, it's late,' he whispered behind me. I turned away. 'If I'm tired, I'll sleep in the car.' Then he will come back.' I was completely terrified. 'What?' Charlie was so excited; I was so sad

when he hesitated. 'He called him while you were out. Things were not going well in California , and if Deann could not sign at the end of that week, they would return to Arizona. The Sidewinders assistant coach said they may have another position. A moment.' I shook my head trying to remember my confused thoughts. Every second that passed put Charlie in more danger.' I have a key.'

I hesitantly turned to read. He was close, one hand outstretched

to me, his face surprised. I will not waste any more time arguing with him. I must hurt him more.' Let me go, Charlie.' I echoed my mother's last words when she walked through this door so many years ago. I told them as angrily as I could and closed the door. 'It is not going to work, okay?

'I hate McAuley so much!' My harsh words had done their job- Charlie was smiling at the door, surprised, and I ran into the night. I was really scared of the empty yard. I

saw the dark shadow behind me and ran weakly to the car. I threw my bag on the bed and opened the door. The key was waiting numbly.' I will call you tomorrow!' I yelled, wanting more than anything I Hadad ever expressed before, knowing I could not. I started the engine and turned it off the engine. Melvin held out his hand.' Pull over,' said the house, and Charlie disappeared behind us. 'I can drive,' I said, tears running down my cheeks. His long arms unexpectedly grabbed my waist, and his foot

pushed my foot off the gas pedal. He pulled me onto his lap, put my free hands on the wheel, and suddenly sat in the driver's seat. The car did not move. 'You can't see the house,' he explained.

Suddenly the lights behind us turn on. I looked out the back window in wide terror. 'Naddalin Natalie is done now,' she said. He held my hand again. A picture of Charlie filled the picture of Charlie on the door. 'Follow up?' He heard

the end of your presentation,' Melvin said. Charlie?'

I asked him what I knew.' The tracker followed. He is running behind us now.' My body froze. Can we let him out?' No. But he got up as he spoke. The car's engine screeched in protest. Suddenly, my plan did not feel so bright. I was watching Naddalin Natalie's headlights as the car pulled up and a black shadow appeared outside the window. Before Melvin's hand fell to my mouth, I was bleeding. He took two seconds. 'It's

Dejen!' He released my mouth and wrapped an arm around my waist. 'It's okay, Lily,' he promised. 'You'll be fine.'

We ran through the quiet town to the northern streets. 'I don't understand how you're still bored in the small town,' he said, and I knew he was trying to distract me. Time. I am telling myself that my life is more interesting for you.' 'I'm not good,' I said, ignoring his efforts to distinguish. - Another, on my knees, watching. 'That's what Mother said

when she left him. You can say I hit a belt.' 'Don't worry, he'll forgive you.' He smiled a little, though he did not meet her eyes. I looked at her worriedly, and she saw the empty fear in my eyes. 'Lily, everything is going to be okay. For a few days,' he said and hugged me tightly.

'Don't forget it's your idea' is a great idea - mine of course. His answer was rubbish and he immediately disappeared.' Why is this happening?' I asked, my voice cracking. 'Why me?' He looked down

at the road. 'It was my fault-I was a fool to expose you like that.' The excitement in his voice was managed from within. 'That's not what I meant,' I choked. 'I was there, it was important. It did not bother the other two. Why did Santiago decide to kill people everywhere, why me?' He hesitated thoughtfully before answering, 'I have a good idea in his mind tonight,' he began in a deep voice.

'I'm not sure if there's anything I can do to prevent it,' he

saw you once. It was partly your fault.' His voice was worried. 'If you did not smell so luxurious, he would not mind. But when I defended you...well, that made it worse. He is not used to being denied, no matter how important the matter. He thinks of himself as a hunter and nothing else. His life is consumed by the pursuit, and he is a challenger in his life. He asks for a situation.

Suddenly we offer a good test - a big shot of strong warriors to protect every vulnerable body. Now

you will not believe how great it is. This is his favorite game, and now we have made it his most enjoyable game. His voice was full of joy. 'He remembered for a moment.' 'But if I had gotten up, he would have killed you then,' he said hopefully. I thought ... I do not have the same smell on others ... as I do on you,' he said. But this does not mean that they are not tested by each. If they agree with the tractor - or any of them - if they agree with me in the same way, then it means war there.'

'I have no choice but to kill him now,' he thought. 'Melchor doesn't want this.'

I could not see the river in the dark, but I could hear the wheels crossing the bridge. I know we are close. I had to ask him now.' How do you kill a vampire?' He looked at me with unreadable eyes and suddenly his voice was sad. The only way to be sure is to destroy it and burn the pieces. 'And the two of them fight?' The woman. Not sure about Emilyn.

They do not have a strong bond - it is just there for convenience. Santiago shames him in the field... 'But Santiago and Seth - will they try to kill you?' I asked what my voice was. 'Lily, do not worry when you are worried about me. All you are worried about is protecting yourself and please, please - you are trying not to be rude.' 'Still? Follow?' Yes. But he does not attack the house. Not tonight.' He turned off the invisible drive, Naddalin Natalie following behind him. We closed in

on the house. The lights inside were bright, but they did not do much to dispel the darkness of the forest.

Dejen opened my door. Before the car stopped. He pulled me out of the seat and placed me on his chest, as wide as a football. The door swung open, and we entered the great white room, Melvin and Naddalin Natalie beside us. They were all there with the sound of footsteps as we approached. Emilyn stood between them. I could hear the faint sound of a pipe in Dejen's throat

as he dropped me next to Melvin. They were following us,' Melvin said, in Emily's face. He was sad. 'I was afraid of that.' Naddalin Natalie danced beside Jae and whispered in his ear; Her lips were told by the speed of her silent speech. And they went. Vivian looked at them and immediately went to Dejen's side. Her beautiful eyes were intense and- as they flashed unbelievably into my face--he was angry. What is he going to do?' Melchor asked, filling Emilyn in.' 'I'm sorry,' he replied. 'I was

afraid he'd put him there when your son was defending him.' 'Can you stop him?'

Emily shook his head. 'There's no stopping Santiago when he starts.' For him,' Dejen promised. No doubt he meant it.' You cannot take it. I have never seen anything like it in three hundred years. He let it go. And I joined his promise.' His promise, I thought, of course. It was only to show leadership in purification, a show. Emilyn shook his head. He looked at me, pleaded,

and returned to Carlyle. 'Of course. they are. Do you understand?'

Melvin filled the room. Emilyn was crying. Melchor looked at Emily intently. 'I am afraid you must choose. Bright room.' I am amazed at the life you have created here. But I cannot log in here. I have no hate, but I am not going to go against Santiago. I am the head of the North - that tribe in Denali. His mind is amazing, and his passion is unmatched. He is as comfortable in

the world as you seem, and he will not come to you...

I am sorry I neglected you here. He was incredibly sad.' But as he bent down, I saw him driving another riddle.' Calm down,' Melchor replied casually. Emilyn checked himself and hurried out the door. The silence lasted less than a second.' How close?' Melchor looked at Melvin. Karly; his hand went to the wall and a large key on the wall, and with a sigh, began to seal the large metal shutters to the mirror on the

wall. I was incredibly surprised.' About three miles across the river; He turned around to find the girl.'

-And-

'What's the plan?' We led her, then Jae and Naddalin Natalie ran south.' 'And then?' Melvin's tone was deadly. 'Once it's clear Lily, we'll teach.'

'I guess there's no other choice,' Melchor agreed, frowning. Melvin turned to Vivian. 'Get her ladder and business clothes,' Melvin ordered. He stared at her in

disbelief.' Why?' he doubted. 'What is he to me? Other than a danger-a danger you choose to ignore for all of us. I recoiled from the venom in her voice.' Rose...' Dejen murmured and put a hand on her shoulder. He shook his head. But knowing Melvin's anger, I looked at him carefully, worried about his reaction.

I was surprised. He saw that Vivian was lifeless, unable to speak.' Karly?' he asked softly.' Of course, Karly complained. Karly was at my side in half a heartbeat, easily

swinging me in her arms and washing up the stairs before I could gasp in shock. 'What are we doing?' I gasped as he led me down the second hallway into a dark room. 'Trying to block the smell won't work for long, but it will help you out.' I could hear his clothes falling to the floor. 'I don't think I agree...' I was hesitating, but suddenly his hands pulled my shirt over my head. I immediately took off my jeans. He gave me something like a shirt. I had a tough time getting my hands into

the right hole. As I did so, he handed me his pants. I took care of them, but I could not find my feet; They are exceptionally long. He threw up the heat several times to get me up.

At least he was in my clothes. On the steps where Naddalin Natalie stood, he handed me a small bag in one hand. As they approached the stairs, they grabbed one of my elbows and half-carried me. Everything seems fine without us. Melvin and Dejen were ready to leave, Dejen carrying his heavy

backpack over his shoulder. Melchor had a small hands-on Karly. 'Karly and Vivian will take your car, Lily,' he said as he passed. I tried, looking intently at Vivian. He beamed at Melchor with a sad expression, 'Naddalin Natalie, Jae - find Mercedes. You will need the dark mines to the south.' And they ran.' We are taking a jeep. I was surprised to see that Melchor was planning to go with Melvin. I was shocked to learn that they were suddenly forming a hunting party.' Naddalin

Natalie Carlyle, 'Will They Take Common Sense? Everyone looked at Naddalin Natalie as she closed her eyes and was still stunned. His eyes finally opened. 'He'll follow you. The woman will follow her car. Then we will have to go.' His voice was confident.' Let us go.'

Melchor started walking towards the kitchen. But sometimes Melvin was by my side. He grabbed me in his iron grip, crushing me into him.

He did not seem to know that he was looking at his family as he pulled my face to his and lifted my feet off the floor. For a moment, his lips were shy and heavy on mine. Then it is over. He sat me down, still holding my face, his precious eyes burning into me. she cried, dying of excitement, as she turned. And they are gone. We stood there, the others watching me with tears streaming down my face. A moment of silence continued, and Karly's phone slipped out of her hand. 'Now,' he said,

cupping his ear. Vivian opened the front door without another glance in my direction, but Karly kissed me on the cheek as she left.

'See you soon.' His whisper stopped them as they made their way to the door. I heard my car very loudly, and then I was gone. Jae and Naddalin Natalie waited. Naddalin Natalie's phone was in her ear before it rang.' Melvin said the girl was on Esmee's Road. I will get the car.' Melvin walks away and fades into the shadows of the street. Jae and I

looked at each other. He stopped an entrance length from me... careful.' You are wrong, you know,' he said softly. 'What?' I stopped. 'How you feel right now-and you deserve it.' 'No,' I snapped. 'If something happens to them, it won't happen again.' 'You're wrong,' he repeated, smiling. I did not hear anything, but Naddalin Natalie came to the door and came to me with her arms outstretched. I agree. he asked. You are the first to ask for permission. I smiled. He pulled me up to his

boyfriend who hugged me as easily as Dejen, then we flew out the door, then we flew out the door and the lights came on behind us.